INAUGURAL ADDRESS TO 9TH SESSION OF THE SCHOOL OF THE WISDOM, 1957

BY

N. SRI RAM

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This School has now been going on for nine years. Those who have been present at previous sessions will agree with me when I say that practically everyone who has attended the classes and the meetings has felt pleased, even exhilarated, that he was able to come here and attend the School.

Coming to the work of the School of the Wisdom, what is it that we call Theosophy, which we discuss in class and at meetings? Broadly speaking, we study the nature of the cosmos, the world immediately around us, and ourselves.

It is perfectly obvious that some knowledge of ourselves is requisite for anyone who seeks to live his life intelligently. Unless we are aware of our actions and reactions, the various motives which underlie them, of what we think and how we think, we live but mechanically; we are at the mercy of the forces which we have absorbed into ourselves and which direct our lives. But when we understand ourselves, we detach ourselves and even begin to take hold of ourselves; we can see what is good and what is bad in ourselves, what is conducive to our own happiness and that of other people. There is a good deal in each one of us to be thus sorted out and disposed in various ways. Also in Theosophy we obtain an over-all view of the universe and the processes which constitute it.

We study the world around us because we are related to it. A knowledge of how we are related, and in what ways, makes a vast difference to our living. There is really nothing

that exists to which we are not related, whether consciously or unconsciously. Everything that produces a thought or leaves an impression on us makes a relationship with us. What we hold as knowledge or as a mere idea, every thought and even a mere memory has a certain effect on our lives. As Krishnaji says so often: To be is to be related, not only to persons but also to Nature and to everything around us, animate or inanimate.

A knowledge of the things around us and of the whole universal process must be of value to us, not merely for that limited purpose which we call utilitarian but for fundamental rightness. Knowledge and being are really two aspects of one and the same process. The activity which I call knowing is a part of the action of my being. In India we are acquainted with the conception that the Deity—by which is meant no personal entity, but the supreme or basic Being—is triple in its aspects. These are usually given as pure Being or Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. This is to indicate that what we are and what we know and how we think are all very closely related.

There are various persons and things around us, and also ideas we come across, whether in books or put forward by people. We respond to them all, and it is this response which makes a change in our condition, although our reaction to these depends on what we already are. This is the process of Karma. We may be aware of a thing or we may not; it is not the awareness that matters from one point of view, but it is the reaction when we are aware, which may take place all unconsciously. The environment and the things in it do not matter so much as what we think or do with regard to them.

When people do not feel happy, they generally want to remove the immediate cause of their trouble and introduce into their lives those things which they think will give them

happiness. That may be right, up to a point, but then it does not go to the root of the trouble, which is in themselves. Also, many things come into our lives which are not of our choice, and we get tired of what we have. All the time events, situations and problems press upon us.

When we say thought, it includes feeling. I do not know whether we think even about what we call inanimate objects without a very slight tinge of feeling, perhaps hardly perceptible, a little like or dislike, may be only boredom. It is what we feel with regard to things, our interest in them, which gives us color to our thought. Perhaps there would be no color in anything if there were not the possibility of some feeling being associated with it. But our feelings are so subtle that it is difficult for us to know them. We have to become conscious of them, of how a thing or person affects us, before we can do anything with our condition.

Every human being is capable of a certain volition which is related to his understanding. This volition is not by itself easily controlled. We cannot easily change our inclinations, even when we perceive them to be bad. We go down an inclined plane, often wilfully blind, into a situation from which we may not be able to retrieve ourselves. But then we can change that inclination by understanding. The way we wish to act or to go depends on our understanding of the thing to which our thought is directed and its relation to other things. When we act foolishly there is always an illusion in which we indulge. Because of the close relationship between understanding and will, we can change the will by understanding.

It is an understanding of ourselves in certain terms and of all things around us, of the whole process in which we are involved, of the phenomena by which we are affected, which Theosophy gives us. There is a certain wisdom which is absolute and is in the nature of things; but it is not easy

to gain it. In the meanwhile we have in Theosophy a representation of it, which expresses the Truth. According to the philosophy that governs a man's life, whether he calls it philosophy or not, is the nature of that life. If he has a right perception of things, he is rightly related to them, and he would act rightly.

In Theosophy, though we try to gain an understanding of all things that take place, we give our attention particularly to those truths which are of the highest significance. This significance has, however, to be realized and discovered by each one individually for himself. Much of what is studied in Theosophy is really a pointer to Truth. The terms we use are mere symbols, and the symbol is never the reality. In Theosophy as we have it there is so much that lies a little beyond our immediate ken, and when we imagine it without any direct knowledge down here, we paint a picture but only with colors we already possess. Imagine any picture you like; you bring into it only elements of material you have already accumulated. Each of us has a palette of colors with which he paints on an outline accepted by him as conforming to his idea of how things might be. But even if the imagination is right, to imagine is not to experience. We have to relate ourselves to the truth more directly and fully. This relationship cannot be through books or lectures. The person who wants to attain a comprehension of what we would call spiritual things has to prepare himself inwardly for them. He has to open himself to them, by emptying himself of all else. When he is free from the play of opposites, the agitations of heart and mind, the truth will come to him of its own accord. The mind which is calm and deep will automatically find the truth within itself.

Of course we can all study, and we do study, various books, but we have to realize that book knowledge is not enough. A man can have ideas about reincarnation, karma, the unity and very many other things, but actually, when there

is a crisis in his life, the death of a friend, separation, misunderstanding or some other difficulty, the ideas fall to the ground. In spite of all the talk about unity, it is the diversity, the difference, which confronts him as a brute reality. What we know only as a theory does not give us the re-assurance we seek. The fact is that book knowledge is but an impression on our minds; the word, the figure, imprinted on a layer of our consciousness, hangs there like a picture on the wall, not even noticed after a time.

To acquire a knowledge of the reality of things one has to live a life that is different, not outwardly such as wearing a yellow or orange robe or other insignia, but different in its values.

All life, as H. P. B. has pointed out, has three aspects: the spiritual, the mental or psychic, and the physical or material. In our studies we concern ourselves particularly with what we might call the spiritual aspect of things, but since we do not have much of an idea of what is spiritual or what is Spirit, we tend to concentrate on the nature of consciousness or mind, its range and degrees. Indeed it is only in that field, through faculties that are spiritual, that we can sense or experience the nature of the Spirit. It is in the depths of our consciousness that we can know directly the nature of life, which knowledge is a knowledge from within. We can know life as it is in a particular form, not by thinking about it nor by observations on its surface, but by making ourselves sensitive to its rays, feeling our kinship with it. After all, as we have been told so often, the One Life is the sole Reality, and life in any individual form is but a manifestation of it, a branch or branchlet of one single river.

Everything in Nature can be approached from within or from without. Every individualized life has its form which expresses its individuality. You can either observe the form from a distance, note its actions, and in that way make a

picture of the indwelling life, or, as Theosophy points out, you can enter the realm of life, identify your consciousness with the consciousness or life in that form and thus gain a knowledge which is living, which pulsates like music that enters the soul when the chords are sounded. This of course is not easy. But as a stepping-stone to this supreme achievement we may even now open our hearts to all things around us, the tree, the flower, the animal, our fellow human beings, and know their nature by sympathy. If we can bring ourselves into a state of self-negation and meet the object in an attitude of receptivity, laying ourselves open to its impact, we may be able to feel something of its nature by a reflection of it within ourselves.

In our Theosophical studies we try particularly to regard each part, each phenomenon, in relation to the whole. If you read such a book as H.P.B.'s *The Secret Doctrine*, what do you find there? You find many things, but taking them all together, you get a certain outline of a universal process which is also in ourselves. The details do not matter, except as they give an insight into the whole. It cannot be said that some knowledge of the whole is without value to the part that is ourselves. It is only in relation to everything else that a thing assumes its proper place, can render its proper service. In the light of the purpose of the whole, the value of the part, its function and purpose are brought into relief.

Theosophy, though it is but a representation to our minds, touched here and there with an unearthly beauty, possessing an illuminative quality, is in reality a Truth that transcends the intellect. That which is in the heart of the universe cannot be conceived by the mind; but mind and heart are related. When the mind is quiet and deep, disinterested, except to know the truth, it becomes one with the heart. Theosophy is for all, which is like saying God is everywhere, in the daisy as well as the skies. It includes the world we can immediately

perceive and what lies outside of it but in relation to it. It satisfies both reason and heart. By reason we perceive the relationship of forms, their evolution and order. By something more than reason, let us call it intuition, we perceive the life, the unity behind the diversity, the nature that lies behind appearance.

I would like to say that we are not here to stuff our minds with mere information. There are many people who develop a thirst for sensation, which they find in the occult. They believe or do not believe what they derive from different sources, according to their predilections and prejudices. But suppose you have vast quantities of information as to so many things in the cosmos, how does it all affect you? You live in a dream world, and when you come to the next problem in life, you wake up and are just as helpless as before. The mere stuffing of the mind is even a hindrance. Everything depends upon how you have placed the information, how you have evaluated it, how you are affected by what is brought into your consciousness. We need a sense of values. There are certain truths which are good to understand, which have a bearing on our lives. If you look at a picture which is beautiful, you are affected by it in a certain way, and that is its significance to you. But if you are merely superficially touched or unduly excited, it has not helped you very much.

The truths we come here to study are particularly about such things as life, death, progress or evolution, the ways of Nature, the constitution of man, the relation between him and his environment, all very practical. Every truth, if it is a truth at all, will be found to have a practical value. It moulds our attitude, it affects our approach to things, so that there is some more harmony between us and the rest of life. Unless the truth makes some difference to our own inner condition, I do not know whether we should call it truth. We might give it some other name. It is the truth about fundamentals that

we should try to study or know. After having attended the School of the Wisdom for four or five months, we should go back not merely with certain things in our note-books or remembered, but feeling in some way inwardly enlightened, freer, happier, more capable of standing on our own feet and deciding our own attitude with regard to things.

It has been said: The Truth shall make you free. When we know the truth about those things which enter into our lives, we are the freer for it. The circumstances and conditions about us might be the same as before, but we feel differently about them and so do not have that sense of restriction or frustration that we had before. The effect of all Theosophical studies should be to produce this feeling, so that we can take things as they come, good or bad, intelligently, not praying for the good and fearing the bad, but making the best of everything. If we can shed the load of our fears and wants and so many other things that make up what we call ourselves, we will be able to live more in the open and lightly. In the measure the Truth has made us free we can help others; after all they are helped more by the spirit which we exemplify and unconsciously convey than by any words we may contrive to use.

Theosophy is Truth and our wisdom comes from the understanding of that Truth. We cannot confine it to a particular book which we may happen to like; for wherever you may find truth, that truth is part of the whole. We may take certain books as our guide or basis, but we might gain wisdom even from the lips of a child, who in his simplicity may give utterance to something that means much more than he himself has understood out of his limited experience.

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